



Tina Kotek, Governor

March 1, 2023

Chair Meek, Vice Chair Boquist, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 149. For the record, I am Chrissy Curran, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer and Deputy Director for the Heritage Division of Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD). OPRD has no position on SB 149.

SB 149 would extend the sunset on the Special Assessment for Historic Properties program until 2030. The Special Assessment for Historic Properties is currently the only state historic preservation tax incentive program. The program, begun in 1975 as the nation's first state-level historic preservation tax incentive, has adjusted and evolved since then to deal with changing laws and political realities. In 2019, a short extension of the sunset passed to allow OPRD to evaluate the program and make recommendations for its future direction. Agency surveys, legislative workgroups, and two more extension bills followed, all confirming the value of the program, but also revealing the need for a comprehensive approach to increase the number of, and access to, historic preservation tools in Oregon.

The Special Assessment program remains extremely useful for commercial rehabilitation projects, linking smoothly with the federal historic tax credit program and the state's Main Street Revitalization grant to cause reinvestment to happen where it otherwise would not have occurred. This program can be used to bring historic buildings into ADA compliance, make seismic improvements, improve energy conservation, and create housing in existing buildings, within existing communities, taking advantage of existing infrastructure.

Unfortunately, the program is not as useful for residential historic property owners who need assistance for smaller, but still critical, projects. These are owners who do not have the upfront cash or the volume of work required by the Special Assessment program. These are owners who have deteriorated porches, roofs, foundations, siding, or windows; needs that would not trigger a re-assessment anyway, but that threaten their ability to maintain, and ultimately to remain in, their historic houses. OPRD continues to participate in a workgroup in the House Revenue committee to develop a suite of possible incentives that could serve residential homeowners in the future.

Special Assessment is an important tool, and the only preservation tax incentive the state currently offers. I would be happy to provide any information or answer questions about the program.